

# A Love Letter To Failing Upward

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Failing upward is simply the concept of failing by mainstream standards and yet achieving more fulfilling outcomes in the long run. Often this is connected to a feeling of unlocking opportunities you didn't even know existed.

## **Power – Failing to take every opportunity to lead from the front**

Due to the unfair distribution of power in society in the hands of very few, the good any one person can strive to achieve is immense, because one can imagine wielding the kind of power those at the top currently have to do good. But this power is unattainable to many.

So, like how a figure like Bernie Sanders could have harnessed the position of presidency to do lots of good, how he did educate the masses on the positives of socialised government institutions and, if he'd gotten into power, mobilise a grassroots movement to demonstrate and strike to push through bills.

But, most importantly power can be a mirage. It's the carrot dangled in front just beyond our reach. We need to create opportunities for ourselves, to achieve great acts of good on our own, like the personal heroism of people flying to Syria to fight Islamic Fascism or organising edible gardens in low-income neighbourhoods.

As well, even though we may cherish those opportunities to do great deeds today, counter-intuitively, the goal should be to move to a world where grand feats of good deeds aren't necessary or possible. So that more people get a chance to strive to do good.

So a move to devolve government power to a multi-party system through preferential voting, to... Some local government positions being elected by sortition, to... The majority of society being so content with worker-co-ops and syndicalist unions that we transition from representative democracy to direct democracy. So, a chamber of ministers to federated spokes councils.

We all know the experience of living under a conservative culture that accepts bigoted assumptions. And we all know of certain unproductive actions which some counter-cultures have dogmatically valorized as the best form of resistance. Both cultures inculcate their members with a 'willing epistemology of ignorance.' That is, a conspiracy to fail to view the world as it is, in exchange for the benefits being a member of that cultural group.

In response, we can simply work hard to fail to be swayed by the fear of what embracing radical compassion will turn you into. Therefore, we must avoid the pitfalls of an illusory politics of resistance which wears its activists out faster than it inspires lasting change.

## **Time – Failing to rush to achieve a bunch of outcomes without fully considering the value.**

With the ever expanding knowledge each new generation is able to harness, the hard material outcomes of our goals in life will always be out performed better or faster than before.

So, while some people fret about failing against others, which makes them feel their life is not worth living, you, by failing to set strict goals for yourself and instead giving a leg up to those around you, can just observe everyone acting around you, contemplate your time and place in history and experience a peace of mind knowing you're part of the fabric of everything.

We were nothing before we were born and we'll be nothing again after we're dead. The zoomed out size of the universe and length of time we aren't around for overwhelms the blip of time we are here. This not-self follows us like a shadow throughout our life, like a chalk outline on the pavement, with every less able iteration of ourselves in between, refracted along a scale and merging back into the universe with other people's similar layers.

A philosophical denial is just a view, a theory... it does not get one actually to examine all/ the things that one really does identify with... as 'self' or 'I', / This examination, in a calm meditative context, is what the not-self teaching aims at. It is not so much a thing to be thought about as to be done.

Finally allow ideas to percolate to the surface, don't rush to nail down what an experience meant to you for time in perpetuity.

## **Authenticity – Failing to modify your behaviour to be more comprehensible**

It can be annoying or hurtful for others to presume they know everything about you, but rather than assert their wrongness and make them defensive, you can acknowledge it as a common human failing and find nice creative ways to hold a mirror up to what life experiences they've had that lead them to jump to that conclusion.

One way is a kind of playful authenticity, telling a lie about a lie, to get back closer to the truth. So don't outright challenge the idea, but don't live up to it either, in fact live down to it. Playfully undermine the idea by failing to live up to the glamour of what it would mean to be that person, then find a way of revealing that it was a misunderstanding all along, so they needn't worry about it applying to you.

## **The Middle Way – Failing to achieve short term gratification**

Take satisfaction in starting a project with the tools at your disposal in which you have no idea whether it'll ever be valuable to others, just that you learnt something new and that you really enjoyed the process.

The more times you unnecessarily turn your hobbies into opportunities to make money or receive external validation, the more likely you are to feel reliant on these excess attachments to be happy.

The way of heaven is like the bending of a bow.

The high is lowered, and the low is raised.

If the string is too long, it is shortened;

If there is not enough, it is made longer.

The way of heaven is to take from those who have too much  
and give to those who do not have enough.

Man's way is different.

He takes from those who do not have enough  
to give to those who already have too much.

## **Knowledge – Failing to keep track of every piece of information**

It's great to live with people who are observant of clues as to your mindset and can offer suggestions to help you or give you the room to learn from your own mistakes where the consequences aren't dramatic.

It's less useful to try and acquire every piece of gossip about a person and come into interactions with funny presumptions about who they are and why they act the way they do.

## **Meaning – Failing to live up to expectations**

Through having an accurate accounting of some of the worst possible outcomes at any moment and having a healthy way of coming to terms with that, we can truly decide if the road we want to be on is as much 'our choice' as anything can be.

Compassionate comedy for the wholesomeness of peoples mistakes is one really great way of feeling comfortable in your own skin. In being able to laugh at ourselves, we

can feel freer to experiment and enjoy a culture with more complex forms of expression being understood.

## **Vulnerability – Failing to avoid pain**

Love is the feeling that you almost had no other choice than pursuing the road you're on. It's both a scary feeling for opening yourself up to pain and a wonderful feeling for realising a passionate interest you may not have even been aware you had. Embrace it.

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Activist Journeys

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